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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 18 October 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I wish to draw your attention to the note on the results of the meeting of the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund which took place in Geneva on 12 October 2006 (see annex).

In accordance with the General Assembly resolution 60/124 of 15 December 2005, the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund was established to advise me on the use and impact of the Fund.

The note summarizes the key points raised during the discussion on both the management of the Fund and its effect on humanitarian operations on the ground. I wish to draw your particular attention to the recommendation by the Advisory Group to reach the Fund target of $500 million as soon as possible. I fully endorse this recommendation and call upon Member States to contribute to the Fund.

I should be grateful if you would bring the attached note to the attention of Member States, ahead of the general debate on the Central Emergency Response Fund in the Plenary under agenda item 69 (a) entitled "Strengthening the Coordination of the Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations", on 13 November 2006.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

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Annex

Meeting of the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund, held in Geneva on 12 October 2006

Note by the Secretariat

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/124 of 15 December 2005, an Advisory Group was established to provide advice to the Secretary-General on the use and impact of the Central Emergency Response Fund. The Advisory Group had an inaugural meeting in New York on 23 May 2006, shortly following the launch of the Fund. Its second meeting took place in Geneva on 12 October 2006, where Advisory Group members reviewed the progress to date and made a number of recommendations on the use and management of the Fund as well as the contribution goal for 2007. The Advisory Group held an informal discussion with participating United Nations programmes and agencies and the International Organization for Migration (the participating agencies) in Geneva on 11 October 2006 and benefited from their assessment of the early impact and effectiveness of the Fund.

2. At the outset of the meeting of the Advisory Group in October, Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, reported on the use of the Fund to date, on the allocations by country and sector, on the steps taken or planned to ensure accountability of Fund grants and to further improve timeliness. Mr. Egeland reported that the Fund had already committed US$ 172.6 million to over 275 projects in 26 countries.

3. The Advisory Group commended the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the participating agencies on their collaboration to establish the Fund as a valuable tool in meeting demonstrable and time-critical humanitarian needs. The Fund has reinforced the humanitarian reform process, facilitated better coordination and prioritization of humanitarian activities under the leadership of resident/humanitarian coordinators, provided equitable response to neglected emergencies, promoted partnership and participation among United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian actors.

4. The Advisory Group recognized that the Fund had begun operation immediately after its launch in order to address the urgent humanitarian needs for which the Fund was created, while at the same time establishing procedures and initiating improvements in the administration of the Fund. The Advisory Group encouraged further improvements through the consideration of an umbrella letter of understanding, delegation of authority and development of additional standardized templates. The Advisory Group invited the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the participating agencies to cooperate closely to achieve these improvements, to elaborate a performance framework for the Fund and to explore alternative arrangements to reduce the volume of individual projects to be processed.

5. The Advisory Group emphasized the importance of a field-driven approach in identifying and prioritizing life-saving activities for funding by the Fund and underscored the need for a flexible approach to the use of the Fund without compromising accountability. In order to enable members to discharge their advisory function, the Advisory Group decided to undertake field visits to

implementation sites and requested the Fund secretariat to make arrangements in consultation with participating agencies and resident/humanitarian coordinators.

6. The Advisory Group confirmed the importance of international and national non-governmental organizations as strategic partners that should be invited to play a more active role in programming and strategizing humanitarian response. The Advisory Group recommended that the Emergency Relief Coordinator together with participating agencies explore ways to foster greater engagement of non-governmental organizations, for example, through the cluster approach or along the model of the rapid response mechanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. The Advisory Group also reviewed the use of the Fund and its relationship with other funding mechanisms at global and country levels, such as the Peacebuilding Fund, country-specific pooled funds and emergency funds of participating agencies. The Advisory Group underscored the importance of achieving complementarity and synergy among these mechanisms to ensure better overall coverage and the timely, equitable and efficient use of resources. It also urged that the reimbursement of Fund grants made to subsequently well-funded appeals should be considered. After reviewing the use of the loan element of the Fund in 2006, the Advisory Group concluded that participating agencies should continue to use the loan facility to complement the grant element. The Advisory Group encouraged the Emergency Relief Coordinator to explore further the feasibility of using the loan facility of the Fund to support valuable activities that were beyond the authority of the grant element of the Fund, such as disaster preparedness and prevention.

8. The Advisory Group commended efforts to establish a performance and accountability framework for the Fund and noted steps made to ensure a balance between accountability and the principles of good humanitarian donorship. Recalling that the General Assembly had requested that the Secretary-General commission an independent review of the Fund at the end of its second year of operation, the Advisory Group welcomed the establishment of an accountability framework for the Fund and the plan to undertake an independent review in early 2007. The Advisory Group urged that the review draw upon the ongoing work of the participating agencies on results-based management, with a view to contributing to a common performance assessment framework.

9. The Advisory Group emphasized the importance of the global ownership of the Fund supported by a broad donorship base. The Advisory Group welcomed that a broad donor base had already been established for the Fund, with 54 donors pledging US$ 273 million for 2006, welcomed the continuing expansion of that donor base, and welcomed the announcement by several major donors that they would increase their donations for 2007. The Advisory Group also noted that some traditional donors had not appeared where they would have been expected on the list of donors for 2006.

10. After reviewing the management and use of the Fund and its contribution to rapid response and underfunded crises as well as to better coordination and prioritization at the country level, the Advisory Group recommended that Member States make every effort to achieve as soon as possible the US$ 500 million target established by the General Assembly. The Advisory Group was of the view that the Fund was indeed a sound humanitarian investment. In addition, the Advisory Group recommended that Member States consider making multi-year pledges to the Fund.

Furthermore, the Advisory Group recommended the high-level participation of Member States at the Fund's conference on 7 December 2006 in New York and agreed to advocate for the early attainment of the agreed US$ 500 million target.